DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 325 549 UD 027 580

TITLE Communication and Development. Farm House Dialogue (4th, Ota, Nigeria, May 12-14, 1989).
INSTITUTION Africa Leadership Forum.
SPONS AGENCY Africa Leadership Foundation.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 34p.; For other Farm House Dialogues, see UD 027 577-584. Document printed on colored stock.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communications; *Developing Nations; Developmental Programs; *Development Communication; Foreign Countries; *Mass Media; *Mass Media Role; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This document summarizes discussions at an invitational workshop on the role of communication in the development process in Nigeria. Discussion centered on the need to democratize the mass electronic and print news media. The following broad issues were discussed: (1) the problems of providing accurate, high quality information to a largely rural, multilingual population through government-owned news media dominated by urban, English-speaking employees; (2) the prohibitive cost of developing both electronic and print communication media and the need for improved training for practitioners who operate in indigenous Nigerian languages; (3) the factors militating against effective communication, including credibility, cultural appropriateness, and technical quality; (4) the role of communication in national leadership; (5) the crucial role of the mass media in delivering educational and social services to rural areas; (6) the need for increased government support of mass communication in the face of spiraling costs; (7) the role of the mass media in building and sustaining a positive national image; and (8) the difficulty of overcoming social taboos and cultural traditions related to communication. A list of participants, the text of the introductory remarks, and a description of the Africa Leadership Forum are appended. (FMW)

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AFRICA LEADERSHIP FORUM

FARM HOUSE DIALOGUE

Communication and Development

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Dialogue 4

12 - 14 May, 1989

UD 027 580

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The Farm House Dialogue is one of the programmes of the Africa Leadership Forum. The Dialogue is in form of a quarterly week-end national seminar on issues, subjects or matters of political, economic, technological or social relevance to Nigeria, West Africa, Africa and humanity at large. Farm House Dialogues take place at Obasanjo Farms in Ota, Nigeria. Africa Leadership Forum is substantially funded by the Africa Leadership Foundation and supported by national and international donors.

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FARM HOUSE DIALOGUE -

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

The Dialogue is neither a political gathering nor is it a gathering to chastise and condemn. It is basically a brainstorming event. Everyone is at liberty to freely express his or her opinions.

It is a concerned attempt to search for solutions to national problems through discussion. It does not seek to delve into who brought about particular predicament of the nation. Although a knowledge of how the nation got to a specific impasse or difficult situation might provide useful lessons for the future.

It, instead, is an attempt to engage in a proper analysis of national problems and arrive through discussions and dialogue at practical suggestions and recommendations which may help in resolving all or part of these problems.

In consequence, the Dialogue places great emphasis on the selection of individuals to participate in the discussions, noting the importance of inviting always personalities who have knowledge and insights into the particular national issues being discussed and who can make substantial contributions.

It is aimed not always to reach consensus but to provide opportunity for recording honest disagreements on vital national issues.

Each Dialogue will result in a publication that will capture the essence of the discussion and the main conclusions reached.

FARM HOUSE DIALOGUE

Dialogue 4

COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Chairman: Alhaji Ahmed Joda
Rapporteur: Dr. Olatunji Dare
Editor: Professor Akin L. Mabogunje

The fourth Farm House Dialogue took place as usual at the Obasanjo Farms in Ota on May 12 to 14 1989. Following the trend began during the last Dialogue, General Obasanjo as chief host delivered an opening address. In this he enjoined participants to examine the role of communication in the development process generally and more specifically to consider how media communication can aid national integration and national unity (see Annexure I for full text). He emphasized the guiding principle that discussion at the Dialogue was meant to be free, frank and non-attributable. The expectation was that participants would strive for consensus but where this was not possible, differences were to be stated as clearly as possible.

Alhaji Ahmed Joda as Chairman of the Fourth Dialogue also delivered an address (Annexure II). He noted that in any society, the successful conduct of public affairs depended on the ability of the government and the governed to understand one another and to determine together the goals of the society. While acknowledging that for this purpose there was now available a vast array of fast modern and sophisticated means of communication, he observed that established channels that served the same ends very well in the past still existed in large parts of the country. If these could be integrated with modern instruments

of information dissemination, the results could be most efficient in getting government's message effectively to the people. He cited an instance when, during the 1963 census, vital information were disseminated effectively throughout the Adamawa province of the old Northern Region, a province measuring 550 miles from north to south. Within hours of the message being received from Kaduna and without the aid of telephones, telegraph, radio or television, with hardly any motorable roads and certainly without the use of helicopters, it was disseminated through the length and breadth of the province. These well-tried traditional methods of communication remained for use today and needed to be preserved.

With the two addresses setting the stage for discussion, participants agreed to structure the Dialogue around the following nine broad issues:

1. Definition of Communication and Development.
2. Actors in the Communication Process.
3. Communication Infrastructure and Training.
4. Factors militating against effective Communication.
5. Communication and Leadership.
6. Communication as a tool of Education.
7. The Economics of Communication.
8. Communication and the National Image.
9. The Cultural Context of Communication.

DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Communication is defined as an interactive process involving the imparting of ideas, information, values, knowledge, feelings and so on within society. It is not a one-way affair from a source to a receiver but entails a critical feedback component without which its effectiveness is incomplete. Communication can thus be seen as a fundamental social process covering vast area of human interaction. For the purpose of the Dialogue, it was decided to limit the field of concern and to concentrate mainly on the media of mass communication, without forgetting the continued importance of traditional media of communication.

As regards development, participants recalled that the First Farm House Dialogue on *Leadership and Development* had defined development "as a

process concerned with people's capacity in a defined area, over a defined period to manage and induce change; that is to predict, plan, understand and monitor change". The more people develop, the more they become instruments for further change.

The report of the first dialogue observed further that increases in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represent nothing more than an intermediate, material level in such a development process. Such increases are the products of the change process and the input for further change. The report further identifies education as the critical factor in a people's ability to induce and manage change. It develops the ability to face the challenges of making choices in a changing situation while also increasing the choices available. This definition of development was found adequate for the purpose of the Fourth Dialogue especially as it encompassed the various dimensions of development - economic, social, political and psychological - which needed to be kept in view in examining the crucial role of communication in the process of a nation's development.

ACTORS IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The Dialogue recognised three main actors in the communication process, viz:

1. Government;
2. The Public; and
3. Media Practitioners.

Government, it was noted, was the dominant actor in the mass communication process in Nigeria. Participants argued as to why this was so and whether this was healthy for the development process. It was recognised that government's dominant role in the communication process in Nigeria flowed from three main factors:

1. Government's exclusive ownership and control of the electronic media and its ownership and control of a large section of the print media;

2. Government's dominance in domestic policy-making and in international relations where it is, in fact, the sole actor;

3. The traditional definition of news (the main content of present communication) as events involving significant people or the acts of such people who, invariably, are authority figures in government.

Participants reasoned that government's dominance inthe communication process was consistent with the general trend in the Nigerian society. But they noted that this had the implications of exposing government frequently to the temptation of manipulating information. It was argued that this temptation was not limited only to government but was equally a factor with media owned by individuals or even corporate bodies. The Dialogue thus acknowledged the sensitivity of the electronic media for such information manipulation and the public unease about extending ownership and control to individuals who, in any case, were likely to be the wealthy and well-connected who already wielded a great deal of influence in society.

Nonetheless, it was observed that the prevalence of private ownership in the print media has been a factor for not only its greater dynamism but also the more democratic nature of access to it. This democratisation of access as well as the diffusion of ownership had been a critical element in minimising the potential for abuse inherent in individual and corporate ownership of the print. Consequently, the issue with respect to the electronic media could be rephrased as follows: How could access to the electronic media be democratised such that communication through these media would no longer be uni- directional, top-down and one where government did all the talking while the citizens remained at the level of passive listeners? To correct the present situation, the Dialogue suggested that special channels could be designated for the use of small, independent operators with rules of operation laid down by government. Furthermore, communities could be encouraged to own and operate their own channels. This would enable them to communicate with governments and to intimate government of their needs and their reactions to government policies. More importantly it would allow for greater and easier mobilization of the people towards development and integration and facilitate inter-community communications.

Participants also examined ancillary communication facilities and services such as the postal system, telegraphs and telecommunications. It was observed that the present poor operational standard of these systems had the effect of substantially raising the cost of communication in the country, making the work of media practitioners as well as general social intercourse difficult and generally undermining the nation's development effort. It was argued that a major step in enhancing the role of communication in the development process was for government to pay greater emphasis on acquiring communication systems which our

present technological ability could maintain rather than costly sophisticated systems not appropriate for the present state of our management capability. Fond references were made to the efficiency of the crude communication facilities of the pre-independence period.

With respect to the public who were the audience and recipients of mass communication, the Dialogue was of the opinion that in Nigeria at present they were largely taken for granted. The public was often seen in the communication process as a captive audience with little discernment or critical faculty. They were expected to simply respond on cue to stimuli from communicators. These presuppositions had tended to render communication less effective than it could be. Very often, members of a target audience might in fact not receive the message at all or might interpret it in the light of their predispositions in a manner not in accord with the intentions of the communicator. Messages might even be distorted through selective attention or selective perception or even selective retention. It was thus imperative that in the communication industry, greater attention needed to be devoted to understanding the characteristics of the varied audiences being addressed on any particular occasion. It was also important in communicating development information to device various ways and media strategies for securing the attention of the audience, arousing and sustaining their interest. Above all, it was vital for any good communicator to ensure that he generated feedback from the audience as a means of establishing that the message being communicated had indeed been received and understood in the manner it was intended to be understood.

Media practitioners were identified as the third major group of actors in the mass communication process. In Nigeria, it was observed that media workers were largely male, urban-based, fairly well educated individuals whose fluency is usually in the English language. Majority of them could hardly communicate effectively in the indigenous languages. Thus, all their communications were usually done in English with little or no information processed and passed on in the native language.

On the other hand, the majority of practitioners involved in the dissemination of information in the indigenous languages either in newspapers or on radio and television for audiences not literate in English were usually less well educated although they too were often urban based. The consequence has been a variation in the quality of information and communication processed to the two categories of Nigerians. For the Nigerians literate in English, the quality and quantity of media fare available were by far superior to what were available to this category of Nigerians, those literate only in the indigenous languages had a choice in most cases of one or two newspapers publishing only once a week.

One notable exception was the case of Nigerians in Hausa who had access to *Gaskiya Ta fi Kwabo* published three times a week. The indigenous language newspapers, moreover, tended on the whole to be less serious in their orientation to issues; their information horizon also tended to be low and their mobilisation potential relatively weak. In consequence, it could be expected that over time the perception of reality as between a person who regularly read the English Language newspapers and another who read only the indigenous language newspaper differ very widely.

The same situation held true for radio and television. Whilst the English-speaking radio listener could monitor at least four major news bulletins a day, plus hourly summaries, the listener who did not understand English must content himself with a brief summary once or at most twice a day. Entertainment and instructional programmes showed the same stark difference in their provenance the two categories. The result of all this was that the vast majority of Nigerians were marginalised when it came to media communication. Even where they were catered to, the information provided tended to be so minute in quantity, usually distorted and of generally low quality. The situation in some cases reached the ridiculous extent where so-called "rural newspapers" were published in English and were often no more than "rural" editions of the English Language press.

In the view of the Dialogue, if development was about mobilizing and releasing the creative energies and potentials of all the people for positive change, there was a dire need to reorient and restructure the flow of information as regards the vast majority of the Nigerian public. More time and attention needed to be paid to producing adequate, really informative and interesting material for this audience and attempts made to secure a feedback of their understanding and reaction to the major events sweeping through the country especially the current economic crisis.

The Dialogue expressed concern that the quality moral leadership exhibited by media practitioners in many instances left much to be desired. It was observed that media practitioners often indulged in flagrantly unethical practices that media seriously compromised their integrity and that of the news media as an institution. Such acts were identified as including acceptance of gratification in cash or kind to publish or kill stories or to peddle influence. These practices were said to exist at every level of the profession.

The calibre of professional leadership, especially in government- owned media, was also adjusted to be in some instances unsatisfactory. The best people were often by-passed in preference for less competent people

Patronage and merit must go hand-in-hand to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. This often led to loss of morale among the staff. Ideally, a leader's authority should match his ability and professional competence if he was to be credible and respected.

The Dialogue called on professional associations to monitor the activities of their members and ensure that they upheld the highest ethical standards if they were to effectively perform their duties as society's watchdogs and the nation's conscience.

COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAINING

The Dialogue examined the various modes and processes of communication and distinguished between the traditional and the modern. It observed that in a country such as Nigeria both still had a place and must complement each other. It was acknowledged, for instance, that rural dwellers related more meaningfully to and with the traditional modes of communication involving town criers and the village square meetings. Moreover, it was noted that villagers tended to give greater credence to information emanating from traditional rulers.

The Dialogue also commended the use by the present administration of what has now become known as "the People's Parley" or, "the Village Forum" whereby the highest government functionary in a state notably the Governor physically met to discuss with people in the rural areas. The capacity of this communication interaction for instant feedback was noted and regarded as highly beneficial for all concerned. It should not be a once-only affair. It was suggested that such parleys could come to be manipulated, abused and turned into a propaganda forum. Most participants, however, felt that the rural populace had enough native intelligence to be able to see through such chicanery whenever it was attempted. And at that point it would lose its value.

Traditional modes of communication had the singular advantage that their infrastructural needs were always minimal. By contrast, most modern modes were usually capital-intensive in their infrastructural requirements. The Dialogue was concerned that the cost of setting up new media outlets had become prohibitive. New printing and broadcasting equipment were virtually out of reach of all, including governments. Even spare parts had become so costly that it was difficult to maintain existing plants.

But the situation need cause no serious alarm because there existed a great deal of unutilized and underutilized capacity in the country. Newspaper printing plants designed to run for 24 hours a day continuously had, since their installation, been running for only three or four hours a day. Each newspaper made its own distribution arrangements, investing in costly fleet of vehicles which were hardly fully loaded on distribution rounds and which therefore added greatly to production costs. Broadcast equipment and facilities were also not used optimally.

The Dialogue therefore called for a greater emphasis on the rationalization of communication resources nation-wide. The Association of Newspaper Proprietors of Nigeria should be able to reach some realistic understanding as to how to bring down production costs through improved capacity utilization of their highly expensive equipment and infrastructural facilities. The days of accepting such under-utilization as part of a strategy of mindless competition should be seen as gone and gone for ever. The same compelling necessity for stricter rationalization of electronic media equipment was also called for especially through greater collaboration among the different governments of the Federation which, at present, monopolised the ownership of this particular mode. Some degree of standardisation of models could greatly facilitate progress in this direction.

In view of the increasingly high cost for the ordinary Nigerian today of procuring radio sets and having to buy accessories like batteries on a recurrent basis, the Dialogue considered the expediency of re-introducing rediffusion sets to enhance communication effectiveness at the grassroots. It was suggested that, far from being a retrograde step, this could be seen as being in line with recent development of cable television and radio for specialised programmes in developed countries.

The Dialogue also considered the training of media practitioners particularly those who operated in indigenous Nigeria languages. It was agreed that these needed to be trained to a level comparable to that of those who worked in the English language media.

Training was also required for all categories of media workers. This should pay due regard to issues of culture and language. It should also emphasize subjects specialisation and greater use of libraries. The Dialogue also called for the decentralization of the media. This would entail the establishment of community radio stations in various local government areas. Such stations could make use of community-based individuals to serve as stingers and correspondents.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The Dialogue identified three major factors as capable of militating against effective communication. These were:

1. Credibility of the source or the medium;
2. Content or message being communicated;
3. Channel noise.

Credibility of the source or the medium.

This factor was held to be of overarching importance in communication. If a source was perceived as unreliable or untrustworthy by the audience, its message was unlikely to be believed. And if the medium was also seen in the same light, the message would suffer the same fate. The example was cited of how the Federal government-owned Morning Post or Sunday Post died from lack of patronage. The public no longer bought the papers because they no longer trusted them. Their publishing offices and distribution vans were often violently attacked. Another example was from the former Western Nigeria where populations returned their rediffusion boxes because they were being used to broadcast false election results.

The Dialogue noted that sources or media which had been employed in the past to mislead or even deceive the public could not usefully be employed to mobilize those same people for development. Communication media could serve the interest of their owners better if they maintained a credible image at all times rather than indulged in unrealistic and information manipulation.

Content or message being communicated.

The message being communicated could itself militate against effective communications. If it employed language or cultural symbols that the audience could not decode, if there was no common frame of reference between sender and receiver, a message could fail in its effectiveness. If the message ran counter to strongly-held beliefs or well-entrenched traditions, or if it was not considered relevant to audience needs, it could also militate against effective communication.

Channel Noise.

Channel noise was identified as another factor militating against effective communication. This could take the form of poor signals, fuzzy pictures or smudged print. Channel noise could also be said to result from such ancillary sources as poor postal and telecommunication facilities as well as government regulations, self and official censorship.

The Dialogue also took the position that if the communication media were to serve as effective agents and catalysts of development, they must be perceived to be credible at all times and must use credible sources as senders of messages. It stressed again the need for communicators to understand the audience as well as the culture so as to be able to employ the most effective codes in relating to them.

COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Dialogue identified a strong relationship between effective communication and leadership, whether in government, in business and industry, in the professions or at the community level. A leader must be a good communicator if he is to succeed in mobilising the populace and making them accept the hard choices that development often entails.

It is through the effective use of communicative skills that a leader conveys to the people policies and programmes of development, enlists their acceptance and support, and strikes an understanding with them. But a good leader must go beyond this. He must be able to articulate clearly and convincingly the goals of society. To be able to do this, he must also possess a clear and sincere vision and evince a strong sense of purpose and direction.

To mobilise the people for development, a leader must possess strong interpersonal communication skill. This entails the ability to put himself in imaginative empathy with his audience and to come across as one of them. He should be able to draw from experiences to which they can relate and use symbols that will strike a responsive chord in them. He should also be able to address the people in clear, simple language, devoid of cliches and jargons that may overawe rather than engage their consciousness. His message should be timed in such a way as to win the highest level of attention.

If source credibility is important in any form of communication, it is decisive in the case of communication by the leadership. A leader who is perceived as untrustworthy, insincere or unreliable may possess great communicative skills, but he is unlikely to be a successful or effective communicator. A tradition of mutual trust and confidence must exist or be created between a leader and his audience. Believability has to be earned through and through. Oratorical versatility and verbosity do not automatically produce such an outcome.

Leadership has the obligation to employ communicative skills in the service of national unity, national integration and national development and in the building of confidence and a high sense of national self-esteem among the people. A leader must not use these skills for demagogic ends, or to manipulate one section or interest against another. Media workers should also possess the above qualities to a high degree. They bear a special responsibility in assisting leadership in its task of mobilisation and development. Media negativism, excessive skepticism and poor understanding of issues can weaken the impact of even the best communication by a leader.

COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL OF EDUCATION

Communication was identified as crucial to development in such areas as non-formal education, agricultural extension, for raising productivity, and for disseminating knowledge and information on health, nutrition, family planning, and

so on.

In the areas of agricultural extension, good and appropriate communication could facilitate greater participation by local farmers and assist in enhancing their understanding of how to secure and use credit to raise their productivity. Equally it could enhance rural activities in the areas of marketing, social service delivery, project administration and training in organisational and technical skills.

The agricultural extension agent is basically source of new information to the majority of rural dwellers. These agents are few and reach only a fraction of this population. The same is true of social workers. The specialised knowledge which they have to impart can be diffused to a much larger audience by using the mass media. Physical participation can then be promoted through interpersonal less frequent contacts.

Marketing also depends to a significant extent on information. In the rural areas, social services are a mix of resources and information, whether we are dealing with adult education, health, family planning, nutrition or community development. Efficient administration depends on effective communication between field workers and central project leaders to get them to accept innovations in all of these fields. All forms of training consist by and large in imparting ideas, knowledge and skills and these can be facilitated through improved communication modes and skills.

Nonetheless, the Dialogue recognised that while communication was a necessary condition for development, it was not a sufficient condition. It could not be substituted for other material resources needed for development. Nor must it be assumed that public information with developmental value reached everyone. The rural poor were usually isolated from such information because of illiteracy and their suspicion or communication coming from a government they considered negligent of their needs and welfare. Critical as communication was to development, one question must always be kept in mind, namely: Is it information that people lack, or the resources for putting such information into productive use?

The Dialogue answered both of these questions in the affirmative. Specifically with regard to inadequate informational resources being available to a large majority of Nigerians, the Dialogue felt that whilst media practitioners continued to do their best, there was need to review present programmes and devise new strategies for reaching an increasingly wider circle of Nigerians. Information to the largely illiterate Nigerian population could be packaged more imaginatively such that even the most serious issues could be presented in a man-

ner to grip and sustain their attention better. Media practitioners must also strive more than ever before to utilize most judiciously the limited existing resources to enhance the degree of public enlightenment and education of the masses of our people.

ECONOMICS OF COMMUNICATION

The Dialogue took note of the high cost of communication and of its inputs. The cost of new communication equipment now went into astronomical figures and many inputs such as film, tapes, ink, compugraphic paper, cameras, microphones, and so on had to be imported with scarce foreign exchange. The same constraint applied to spare parts. Even the cost of telephoning news had risen quickly to prohibitive levels.

These spiralling costs of communication had far-reaching implications. Most people had to cut down on the number of newspapers they subscribed to following the increases in cover price of each paper to one naira. Because of the dull business climate, advertising no longer cushioned the newspaper from the fall in sales revenue. The same fall in advertising patronage affected both television and radio adversely.

Nonetheless, noting that information could not be treated as a luxury but as an essential commodity, for social interaction and societal well-being, the Dialogue suggested that government might want to consider various means of supporting the communication industry through subsidies and concessionary rates. In this connection, the Dialogue questioned the basis and the wisdom of withdrawing subsidies from a wide range of goods and services essential for the communication industry when Europe and America were paying huge subsidies to such industries to keep them in operation.

The Dialogue, however, recognized that the difficulties of the communication industry could not be divorced from those of the economy as a whole. At a time of structural adjustment, far- reaching changes were called for, and even fundamental assumptions must be constantly questioned and re-examined. This made it necessary to re-emphasize the paramount need for rationalization and more judicious use of available resources. Needless duplications should be avoided and the basis for operating as many as 29 television stations, in the country, all government-owned, should be re-examined. Many of these stations were currently finding it hard to stand on their feet, to originate their own

programmes and to satisfy the needs of their audiences.

The Dialogue also called on media houses to evolve creative ways of putting to fuller use the considerable amount of under- utilized capacity they currently carry. Existing printing presses in newspaper houses which hardly used up to one fourth of their capacity should be made available to the publishing trade group as a whole. New entrants into the publishing industry should be discouraged from thinking that unless they had their own press, they were not really in business. Similarly, each newspaper establishment should review whether it needed a fleet of vehicles, at great purchase and maintenance costs, to distribute its titles. Clearly, everywhere in the communication industry there was today an overriding need to re-define priorities and undertake significant economies without loss of standard, quality and effectiveness.

COMMUNICATION AND THE NATIONAL IMAGE

The Dialogue identified communication as a vital tool for building and sustaining a national image that was compatible with the self-esteem of the Nigerian populace. The present negative image of the country as a place where nothing worked, where highly-placed persons could do and often did whatever they liked without fear of contradiction, where merit counted for little and where people in public life were always all assumed to be corrupt, dishonest and nepotic - all this was capable of subverting the national psyche and doing serious harm to individual self-esteem and public spiritedness.

The Dialogue maintained that it was necessary for media practitioners and the population at large to make the vital distinction between the government of the day and the nation. Once this was done, the media could report the errors and shortcomings of those in power without doing irreparable harm to the nation and to the sense of self-worth of the people. The leadership and the news media, the Dialogue agreed, bore joint responsibility for projecting a good image of the country - the one through correct behaviour and laying good examples, and the other through judicious presentation of facts, without resort to suppression, wrong emphasis or propaganda. Both had the duty to motivate and sustain the moral of those striving to build a positive and reassuring image for the nation.

CULTURAL CONTEXT OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Dialogue noted that Communication to be effective and aid national development must take cognizance of its socio-cultural milieu. It observed that communication were itself part of a people's culture and to a large extent reflected that culture. The critical question, however, was whether there was aspects of the Nigerian culture which inhibited effective communication? It was the considered view of the Dialogue that, at least for now, this question must be answered in the affirmative. Many participants recalled social taboos and cultural norms from their ethnic areas which were restrictive of information dissemination. For example, among many Nigerian ethnic groups questions such as the number of children in one's family or the income earned by an individual or the nature of individual's illness were regarded as intrusive, if not altogether forbidden. Communication with strangers, such as opinion canvassers or field investigators, was not generally encouraged. At best, relating to such individuals was regarded as the exclusive preserve of the head of household. There was generally no tradition of giving out information for the public good.

The Dialogue believed that it was important to understand and appreciate the origin and necessity for such attitude. It recognised that in the traditional past there was a strong need to protect the intellectual property of the community, a practice which was virtually universal and which, in developed countries, was institutionalised through the guild system. Modern improvement on this practice had been to encourage formal patenting and licensing as a guarantee of proprietorship of particular ideas, inventions and innovations.

Nonetheless, it was recognised that this restrictive attitude to information made the work of social research and data gathering for development for planning very difficult. The Dialogue noted that there were invariably ways of getting around such resistances and obstacles. For example, a proper observance of protocol could win the confidence of respondents and make them willing to talk freely. Similarly, sheer diligence and the creative use of an indirect rather than a frontal approach could be productive of valuable results. An understanding of the culture, the Dialogue re-affirmed, could often help minimize the difficulties surrounding the communication process in a country such as Nigeria.

The Dialogue also identified language as a central factor in examining the cultural context of communication. It observed that in a multi-lingual society

such as we have in Nigeria, the question of a national language or lingua franca was more of a political than a cultural issue. The adoption of any existing language as a lingua franca, it was stressed, could only exacerbate the tensions that currently gripped our society. But this was not to rule out the possibility that a national language could evolve in future. For the moment, it was generally agreed that the country had no option but to continue to use English as its official language and as the language of science, commerce and diplomacy.

Notwithstanding, the Dialogue observed that one of the major weaknesses of our development effort to date had been the failure to make its objectives, goals and content easily known and understandable to the generality of the populace. For the future, the Dialogue emphasized that development plans and programmes should be supported by well thought-out communication components. It was not enough merely to put out a plan or programme. The role of communication in ensuring popular acceptance of its goals and its implementation strategies should be spelt out and specific communication tasks mapped out for every stage.

These tasks should include creating awareness of our interest in the various programmes and projects, stimulating desire to participate in plan execution or imparting knowledge and ideas as to what were being contemplated in the different sectors. These could be health, family planning, nutrition, agricultural extension, non-formal education, commodity storage and preservation, marketing, political participation, civic education - indeed any sector or programme designed to give the populace greater control over their environment.

The communication media should, in fact, set the agenda for positive and enduring change by focusing public attention on the need for such change and for better and more productive ways of doing things. The news media, it was agreed, might not be very successful in telling people what to think, but they could be stuningly successful in telling people what to think about. By focussing public attention on change, which is what development is often about, they can better prepare the people for joining making the necessary transforming effort.

This kind of communication, the Dialogue held, was the product of planning, not of chance. Specific audiences had to be targeted; their access to communication had to be assured; their needs had to be ascertained, and their involvement in project planning, implementation and evaluation had to be guaranteed. Access must not be equated with exposure. The possession of a radio set was no guarantee that the set was being used (it might have broken down) or that it was used for programmes designed for specific development goals (it might be used for disco music). The communication industry by making its

product interesting, relevant and enlightening was the greatest insurance that national development could come to involve and to embrace the total population of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Reviewing the broad conclusions at the end of the formal deliberations, the Dialogue returned again to the matter of ownership and control of the news media. Democratization of access was reaffirmed as the better alternative to government or private ownership and control of the news media.

The Dialogue noted that while democratization had proven most beneficent in countries where there was a consensus as to societal values and goals, it could also work in a country such as ours which was still groping towards such a consensus. Democratization, it was held, could help build a strong foundation for such a consensus in place of the pseudo - consensus being forced down from above through the State monopoly of the instrumentalities of mass communication.

Whatever the case, carefully worked-out guidelines should be provided to ensure that democratization constrained the manipulation of information or the potential for doing so through the mass media. To ensure such an outcome, the Dialogue recommended that all public media be placed under a Trust which would guarantee that they were not controlled by any group or interest.

Recognizing that the poor and disadvantaged might not be able to profit from democratized access, the Dialogue also recommended that they should be assisted to exercise their right of access since the media was a marketplace of ideas in which the values and views of all significant groups in society should find accommodation.

The Dialogue again dwelt on the question of leadership in the news media. Because of the centrality of the news media in the social process, leadership in the media should be entrusted to enlightened people with clear vision - people who would not easily be seduced or corrupted by the many guises and disguises that power and patronage assume.

Corruption at the highest levels of media work was held to be far more damaging than the "brown envelope" syndrome which was known to afflict junior

media workers. Patronage in appointment to the top echelons of the media could not be ruled out completely, but merit and integrity should never be totally discounted in such appointments.

The Dialogue expressed concern about what often befell daring and outspoken people in society and in the professions, people who took a principled stand on issues public or non-public and defended it tenaciously even if that stand was unpopular. Such people deserved not only encouragement but also protection, because society needed them in order to progress. The question, however, was how to institutionalize such protection, mindful of course not to create the feeling that opposition to the government or any institution was being encouraged. The Dialogue resolved that this subject was important enough to be the subject of a future dialogue at the Farm House.

ANNEXURE I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. General Olusegun Obasanjo, Former Head of State of Nigeria.

2. Prof. Akin Mabogunje, Pro-Chancellor, Ogun State University and Council Chairman.

3. Alhaji Ahmed Joda, Chairman, SCOA Nigeria Ltd.

4. Chief Simeon Adebo, Former Nigerian Permanent Representative at the United Nations and Former Executive Director of UNTAIR.

5. Mr. Raymond Ekpu, Editor-in-Chief/Chief Executive, Newswatch Magazine.

6. Prof. Femi Osofisan, Ag. Head of Dept. of Theartre Arts, University of Ibadan.

7. Mr. Amuzie Akpaka, Editor, ThisWeek Magazine.

8. Mrs. Eno Irukwu, Electoral Commissioner, National Electoral Commission.

9. Vera Ifudu, Journalist, Lagos.

10. Mrs. Chris Anyanwu, Former Commissioner of Information, Imo State.

11. Mr. Bello Aliu Garga, Kano State Foundation.

12. Mr. Ayo Olanrewaju, News Manager, NTA 7, Tejuoso, Lagos.

13. Dr. Tanure Ojaide, Department of English, University of Maiduguri.

14. Ms. Maudlyn Park, NTA Channel 10, Lagos.

15. Mr. Ayodele Aderinwale, Africa Leadership Forum, Ota.

16. Dr. Olatunji Dare, Editorial Board Member, The Guardian, Lagos.

17. Dr. Yaya Olaniran, Agricultural Consultant, Ibadan.

18. Mrs. Bilikisu Yusuf, Editor, News Nigerian Newspaper, Kaduna.

19. Alhaji Garba Adamu, International Tobacco Company, Zaria.

20. Alhaji Haroun Adamu, Publisher, The Nigerian Economist.

21. Mr. Tommy Odemwingwe, Communication Consultant, UNICEF.

22. Dr. Femi Badejo, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Lagos.

23. Mr. Ibi Sofekun, Pinhole Creations, Ikoyi, Lagos.

ANNEXURE II

OPENING REMARKS BY ALF CHAIRMAN:

General Olusegun Obasanjo

Effective communication as a vital aspects of the development process revolves around the collation, processing and dissemination of information. In effect the ingredient in communication is information.

The onerous responsibility for the performance of this all important task devolves on media practitioners and communicators at large. Flowing from this is the fact that they share in the blame or praise for the state of society at any point in time. This is because as communicators, they can inform and misinform, educate and miseducate, instruct and misinstruct, advise and misadvise, gladden and sadden, boost morale and lower morale, elevate and distress, solidify and disintegrate, cultivate and antagonize.

The consequence is that media practitioners, and communicators have come to represent different things to different people. Given such a kaleidoscopic situation, what you see, believe and understand will be a function of where you sit, stand or lie. Again, the role of media men has more often than not remained a function of their mood, their orientation, the interest of their employer, or of the writer, the editor and the producer,and at times the level of intimidation and or the size of the "envelope".

Media men can state the unpalatable truth. They can cover up the truth, they can check and verify before publishing or they can go for the sensational and the destructive. They can build and they can destroy individuals, groups, in-

stitutions, organizations, sections, communities, subnations, nations and the world community at large.

Media men and communicators are essential part of the society and I am convinced that their first responsibility in a developing country is to engage in developmental communication. I define this to mean understanding precisely the exact factors and elements that can integrate and disintegrate the society because without the community and the nation we are all spiritless, stateless and as much without identity and without fulfillment in our lives.

The second thing for the information industry to note is that media men and communicators must help in the determination and definition of what development is all about, and work tenaciously and assiduously for sustained development and growth.

In an information age, it is imperative that the information industry which affects us in our homes, on the roads, on our farms, at our places of work is too important and too serious an affair to be left solely in hands of media practitioners and communicators. We all have to be involved because our life, our interest, our present and our future are shaped significantly by the information industry.

Let me quote from the acceptance speech of Alhaji Junaidu, the Waziri of Sokoto when he was being conferred with the honorary degree of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

"All communities have an inner life, a spiritual dimension which makes them what they are, gives them autonomy and helps them to rise beyond their present to greater achievement. I am speaking here of the values which they have about, correct relationship between men, about the proper way to behave in conducting the affairs of men and their own views of what constitutes their identity".

The media is one of the guardians of the morals of the society and one of the extollers of its hopes and aspirations. Men and women of the information and communication industry are partners and co-workers with others in the task of nation-building and development. These men and women have advantage but with that advantage goes responsibility.

ANNEXURE III

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

by:

Alhaji Ahmed Joda

Let me first of all say how pleasant a change it is for me to be in these surroundings and in such agreeable company. We have the general to thank for both. I can imagine that it is not so easy to assemble such a group of distinguishes communicators from all over the country and to persuade them to leave all their pursuits, to come to Otta to exchange ideas on a subject whose importance, I think, is yet to be fully realized in our country. That you all have agreed to come and participate is, I think, a recognition of the importance of these discussions and of the subject: *Communication and Development.*

When I received my own invitation, I did not reflect for too long before I indicated my acceptance merely suggesting a change of date because of the public holidays which we have just celebrated. When much later I re-read the invitation and had the time to reflect, I realize that the term of reference was a very wide one, even though at first glance it looked so brief, especially if we take into account the times in which we live and the political and constitutional changes which are taking place in our country.

According to the *Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English,* which is the dictionary immediately available to me, the word *Communication* is defined

as the art of passing news, information, feelings, etc, etc, with other people and the sharing and exchanging of news, views and so on. This is achievable by various means and the General has very carefully assemble for us people who have, at one time or the other, been in the communication industry in this country. I notice that the list contained distinguished people of pen who have been Reporters and Editors of newspapers and magazines of various kinds. There are people from the electronic media, from public relations and entertainment fields as well as some former government functionaries and others. I think that this combination and the timing of our get-together are no accidents.

At any time in the history of any people, a viable ingredients for a successful conduct of affairs of society depends, to a large extent, on the ability of the government and the governed to understand one another and determine in cooperation with one another the aims, objectives, goals of society. In any society, there are strong and well established channels of communication between the constituted authority and the generality of the people who constitutes the various nationalities. In this country, these traditional methods exist and have been used in both our distant past and in the present. I dare say that we will need to continue to modernize and use these methods for as long a time as necessary to communicate with our people in spite of the fact that there exist fast, more effective and much more dramatic modern means of getting across to the generality of our people. I think we must try to use both the modern and traditional. Let me explain what I mean briefly. In our towns and villages, we still have fairly efficient and well known methods of communicating with one another and of explaining to people in different ways as well as imparting ideas to them by such methods through the village heads, the village priests, the Imams or through the town criers, through cultural dances and traditional music and through institutions which have existed in time gone by. I have seen before, and since independence, how these traditional institutions have been effectively used to mobilize the vast population in this country almost instantly. One example I am fond of relating was an occasion in 1962 when the 1963 census was being organized. I was working in Kaduna for the Northern Nigeria Ministry of Information and was on a tour of Adamawa Province. I visited the office of a Councillor in the then Native Authority. While I was in that office, a circular from the Chief Census Officer in Lagos routed through Kaduna arrived at the desk of the Councillor. The circular was read aloud and within a space of a few minutes, a meeting was organized, the contents of the letter fully explained. Without delay, clear and precise instructions were worked out and emissaries dispatched with instructions to have the contents of this circular translated, fully interpreted and delivered to all Adamawa Province from Yola stretches about 200 miles to the North and another 350 miles to the South. There were hardly any motorable roads; there were no telephones or telegraph facilities to use, no

air strips of helicopters to distribute these mails and there was no radio and no television to broadcast to the people. The method used then can still be used today to good advantage. All the artistes were employed to good effect and messages were fully understood and communication was prompt and effective. Of course, it is a fact that everybody knew then that there was going to be a census. The important thing is that the import of the census, its organization and so on had to be understood by the people. Again, apart from knowing, it means that the government leaders and the Native Authorities, the Chiefs of every village were made fully aware and made conversant of what the government was to achieve and why. The machinery was efficient and communication fairly regular in spite of the various handicaps of the time.

Much later, we were faced with far more serious problems and we had to employ all the resources at our disposal to mobilize our people in order to keep the country intact for the future. This, in the circumstance of the time, was not easy, but it had to be done. In 1967, 1968 and 1969 we had to employ to the full the modern as well as the traditional means of mobilizing the population in this country for the purpose of preserving the nation. I think, to a large extent, the employment of these varieties and methods of communicating with people helped to mobilize them for the purpose at hand and assisted government greatly in achieving the national goals.

It is important, perhaps more important today than in the past, to strengthen the interaction between the leadership of this country and the generality of its people. It may be that the integrity of this country has been preserved and it may be that it will be difficult to threaten again our existence as one country in the same was as happened in the mid 60s. However, our desire is not only to maintain our integrity as one nation; we desire to be united, strong and determined in order to develop our country, its resources and all its people. This, we can not achieve while we remain divided in our aims, our goals and our objectives and if we remain suspicious of one another. Those of us who have had the exceptional opportunity of living, working and interacting in different parts of this country and with different people do know that some of the fears and of the suspicions which exist and which militate against our working together for some of the time with the same common objectives are not really well founded. We all have more or less the same problems and the same yearnings. It will pay us better to try and understand these and to know that in spite of weaknesses and impediments here and there, many Nigerians do live and work happily together in towns and villages other than their own and do make their living in peace and happiness. Some of the tensions which arise from time to time need not generate the heat they do now if there is good communication not only between individuals but between private and official institutions and between

leaders in government, leaders of the community and the ordinary people.

I think that a group like ours is well placed to discuss this subject and to propose new directions for effective communication at all levels between all of us, between us and those who have the responsibility to govern and to lead us in these trying times. I think in their own way, the people have indicated that they want a virile, strong and dynamic Nigeria. It is the duty of some of us to work out the modality for achieving these developmental goals and ease the burden on our people.

Thank you!

BACKGROUND NOTE ON THE AFRICA LEADERSHIP FORUM

Despite over a quarter of a century of political independence, Africa's aspirations and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled. This has not been, however, a period of unmitigated failure in the history of the continent; there have been successes in education, public health, import substitution industries, and in the continuing process of decolonization. The problems of development, peace and security, the health of the world economy, and improving the environment are interrelated global issues; they do not admit of piecemeal solutions.

And yet all countries find that in the absence of true global cooperation, they have to tackle particular aspects of them. At the national level in Africa, the inadequacy of information, data, and resources render the problems daunting. Regionally they are overwhelming.

African leaders have frequently come to their positions with limited experience. Though most of them have battled on, confronting their awesome problems of development and nation- building essentially not only unprepared but unaided, their efforts have been at best only a qualified success.

Africa cannot afford to continue with ill-prepared and unassisted leaders. Those on whom the burden of leadership will fall in future must fully comprehend their responsibilities, duties, and obligations. They must, that is, have exposure and carefully planned preparation if they are to meet the challenges that will face them.

The leaders of tomorrow, however, today have to be pursuing their professional careers. They have little time to devote to gaining a comprehensive knowledge of their own countries and their region, nor of the cultures of their diverse peoples. Nor even to learning about and understanding the actions taken by their present leaders where they do not impinge on their own areas of expertise.

Most young potential leaders have focused primarily on single issues,lacking

time to look at wider, critical regional and world challenges. Time for comprehensive study and reflection, for sharing experiences with persons inside, let alone outside, their countries, region, and field of concentration is very limited. Opportunities for such detached discussion and contemplation are even rarer.

There are no private institutions in Africa devoted to preparing potential leaders with a global outlook, leaders who will be able to cooperate within and across national, regional, and institutional boundaries. Further, it is difficult, if not impossible, in many African countries to gain access to relevant and timely information on most national, regional, and global issues.

Experience in and out of Government and in international fora bears out this situation, one which poses a challenge to address and remedy. One solution is to hold periodically the "Africa Leadership Forum" - a series which may be national, subregional, regional and international in dimension and may vary in duration. Their purpose will be to enhance the knowledge and awareness of young, potential African leaders, placing special emphasis on diagnosing apparent failures of the past; on understanding multiple dimensions and complex interrelations of local, national, regional, and global problems; and on seeking possible approaches to solutions.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Forum is to encourage diagnosis, understanding, and an informed search for solutions to local, regional and global problems, taking full account of their interrelationships and mutual consequences.

To that end, the Forum will develop, organize and support programmes for the training of young and promising Africans with leadership potential so as to expose them to the demands, duties and obligations of leadership positions and to prepare them systematically for assuming higher responsibilities and meeting the challenges of an interdependent world.

The Forum will also endeavour to generate greater understanding and enhance the knowledge and awareness of development and social problems within a global context among young, potential leaders from all sectors of society, cutting across national, regional, continental, professional and institutional borders. This may foster close and enduring relationships among participants, relationships promoting life-long association and cooperation;

Further, the Forum will support and encourage the diagnosis and informed search for appropriate and effective solutions to local and regional Africal problems and to global problems from an African perspective - within the framework of global interdependence -, including conideration of phased action programmes that can be initiated by various countries, sub- regions and institutions.

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Date Filmed

March 29, 1991